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Afghanistan Situation Report

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1 July 1986

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AFGHANISTAN SITUATION REPORT 

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The major Soviet-Afghan combat operations south of Konduz that appeared to be ending last week have entered a new phase, while sweep operations near Herat are concluding. 

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REGIME PRESS GANGS ACTIVE 


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The Afghan regime is intensifying efforts to increase military manpower, but its use of press gangs is likely to be counterproductive. 

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ENHANCING NAJIBULLAH'S IMAGE 

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Soviet manipulation of Afghan media to enhance the public image of Afghan leader Najibullah probably will not make much difference in increasing support for the regime. 

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IN BRIEF

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PERSPECTIVE

DIEGO CORDOVEZ: UN SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE TO AFGHANISTAN 

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Ecuadorean Diego Cordovez hopes to use his role as UN negotiator in the Afghan peace talks to help become the UN Secretary General in December. He probably will not succeed either in reaching a settlement or achieving the top spot in the UN. 

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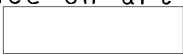


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PERSPECTIVE

THE KONDUZ OPERATION: A LOOK AT PHASE ONE 

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 a major Soviet-Afghan operation south of Konduz in June indicates that the first phase featured heavy reliance on artillery against insurgents in the area. 

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This document was prepared by the Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis and the Office of Soviet Analysis. Questions or comments on the issues raised in the publication should be directed 

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KONDUZ OPERATIONS ENTER SECOND PHASE

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The major combat operations south of Konduz that appeared to be ending last week have entered a new phase. The focus has shifted from Eshkamesh to Namak Ab, as the Soviets and Afghan regime seek to maintain pressure on insurgent forces led by Panjsher Valley commander Masood.

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a combat sweep near Herat is winding down. Major elements of a 2S5 152-mm self-propelled artillery battalion and a motorized rifle regiment are now back in garrison at Herat. The status of another Herat-based motorized rifle regiment and some units from Shindand that participated in the combat operation is unknown, but these units too probably are returning to base. The Herat-Shindand operations, which have been under way since early to mid-month, probably were part of the continuing effort to constrain guerrilla activity along critical road links as well as to weaken the insurgency in Herat city.

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REGIME PRESS GANGS ACTIVE

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The Afghan regime is intensifying its efforts to increase military manpower. Afghan Army forces and members of the Afghan intelligence service surrounded all of the high schools in Kabul in mid-June to round up males eligible for conscription. 18-year old males were inducted on the spot. The new conscripts apparently were not allowed to contact their families and were not told where they were being sent.

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Comment: Continuing high desertion rates and casualties have forced the regime to rely more on press-gang tactics to resolve long-standing manpower shortages. In

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[REDACTED]

addition, the regime recently tightened draft exemptions for students and workers and offered amnesty for draft-dodgers. Most of these measures, however, are likely to be counterproductive, almost certainly further weakening military morale--one of the main reasons for desertions--and hampering efforts of the regime to broaden its popular appeal. [REDACTED]

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ENHANCING NAJIBULLAH'S IMAGE [REDACTED]

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Soviet advisers are manipulating Afghan media to enhance the public image of Afghan leader Najibullah, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] The Soviets have released film and still photographs of Najibullah with religious leaders, deleted Najibullah's comments supporting the Soviet occupation, and spliced film showing favorable crowd reactions to Babrak Karmal's speeches with some of recent appearances by Najibullah. [REDACTED]

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Comment: Soviet propaganda efforts on behalf of Najibullah probably reflect Moscow's concern about dissatisfaction over his appointment. This assistance for enhancing Najibullah's image probably is only cosmetic, however, and unlikely to have much impact on urban populations or disgruntled party members. Najibullah's forced conscription policies, for instance, are widely resented. [REDACTED]

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IN BRIEF

- South Yemen proposed Afghanistan as the nominee of the Asian Group for one of the four vice-presidencies of the 41st United Nations General Assembly, but five group members--the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, Japan, and China--suggested postponing a decision to endorse the candidacy. The US Mission at the United Nations speculates that the proposal was instigated by India. If Asian Group members opposed to the candidacy nominate an alternative, the General Assembly would decide the Asian Group's vice-presidential nominee. The Assembly would almost certainly reject Afghanistan. [REDACTED]

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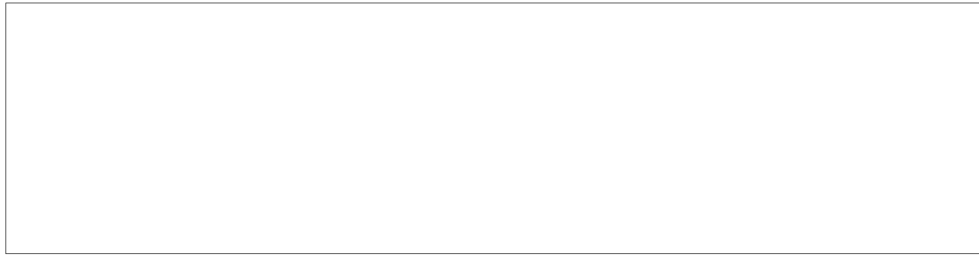
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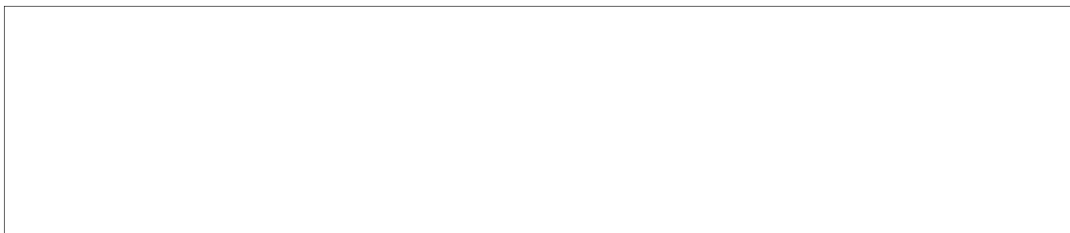
- The Kabul regime has upped its estimate of insurgent damage to the national economy. As recently as March, the Afghan Government claimed that damages totaled 36 billion afghanis--approximately \$260 million at the bazaar exchange rate. However, officials now claim damages equal 40 billion afghanis--about \$290 million. 

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-  a new Soviet border guard unit stationed in extreme northwest Afghanistan at Karez-i-llyas, approximately nine kilometers from the Iranian border. The deployment, which includes a helicopter landing pad and 10 armored vehicles, is similar to other KGB mobile maneuver groups positioned in Afghanistan near the Soviet border. 

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- Last week the Foreign Ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) issued a formal communique urging the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan and the establishment of an independent, non-aligned government. The countries which comprise ASEAN--Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and the Philippines--also expressed support for the United Nations Secretary General's efforts to negotiate a political settlement to the Afghan problem. 

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- Ghairat Baheer, the Australian-based director of the Afghan resistance movement in Southeast Asia and the Pacific, recently accused the New Zealand Government of "apathy" on the Afghan issue and lack



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[REDACTED]

of concern for the Afghan refugees, according to the US Embassy in Wellington. Baheer is seeking financial aid for the insurgency and permission to establish a resistance office in Wellington [REDACTED]

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- The Afghan Government will stage a "friendship jirga" in July, [REDACTED]. A key theme of the ploy to win more support for the regime by Pashtuns will be the portrayal of new Afghan leader Najibullah as a "good Muslim." [REDACTED] the regime is redoubling efforts to open negotiations with important insurgent leaders. [REDACTED]

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PERSPECTIVE**DIEGO CORDOVEZ: UN SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE TO AFGHANISTAN**
Office of Leadership Analysis

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Ecuadorean Diego Cordovez is a skilled diplomat and an experienced negotiator. he would like to parlay an Afghan settlement into a successful bid to become the UN Secretary General in December, but we believe that Cordovez's ambition leads him to express unwarranted optimism about the negotiations. We doubt that Cordovez will achieve an agreement on Afghanistan or that he will attract enough member-nation support to win the top UN post.

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The View from Kabul

Cordovez usually exudes unquenchable optimism on the Geneva talks, even at times when the talks appear stalemated, and he interprets real or implied criticisms of the negotiations as personal attacks. Cordovez, who occasionally quantifies progress in the negotiations, announced in April 1986 that he had achieved 95 percent of an agreement on Afghanistan. US diplomats question his claims, however, and one wryly observed that he may have reached 95 percent of a settlement, but the remaining 5 percent contains 95 percent of the substance--primarily the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan and methods of monitoring implementation of the agreement. Furthermore, US diplomats characterize Cordovez as naive about Soviet negotiating tactics and too willing to believe that Moscow wants to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan.

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According to US diplomats, when Cordovez became Special Representative to Afghanistan in February 1982, Afghan officials opposed his appointment because they feared that he was pro-US. After several rounds of shuttle diplomacy between Islamabad, Kabul, Tehran, New Delhi, and Moscow, however, the Afghans now look more favorably on Cordovez. We believe that this stems, in part, from his habit of blaming the Pakistanis for blocking progress to ensure that the Soviets remain committed to the talks.


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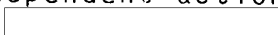
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Aiming for the Top


According to US diplomats, Cordovez sees himself as more dynamic and capable than UN Secretary General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, whom he hopes to replace if Pérez de Cuéllar decides not to run for a second term. Because Cordovez probably views the successful resolution of the Afghan negotiations as key to fulfilling his ambition to become Secretary General, he will, in our judgment, push hard for a final settlement. We believe he will try to reach an agreement before December, when the new Secretary General will be chosen. Even if Pérez de Cuéllar decides not to run for a second term, US diplomats believe several other potential candidates have a better chance of attaining the UN's top post. 

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The UN's Henry Kissinger?

Cordovez is a capable and seemingly tireless negotiator who makes effective use of shuttle diplomacy. Those who deal with him find him tactful, discreet, patient, and attentive. However, US diplomats say that Cordovez's ambition to win higher office negatively influences his negotiating behavior, leading him to tell each side what he thinks it wants to hear in order to continue the discussions. Those diplomats also report that Cordovez's feelings of self-importance have led him to withhold information from Pérez de Cuéllar and fellow team members so that he can appear to be the best informed, most competent participant in the Afghanistan talks. Protective of his role as mediator, he resents independent action by parties to a negotiation. 

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PERSPECTIVE**THE KONDUZ OPERATION: A LOOK AT PHASE ONE**25X1
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The Soviet and Afghan offensive in June in the Eshkamesh area, southeast of Konduz, was the first major combat operation observed there. It suggests that the Soviets perceived an important guerrilla threat in the area. The combat action, and appeared to be entering a new phase featured unusually large amounts of artillery. Afghan regime forces played only a minor role,

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25X1**The Array of Forces**

Soviet and Afghan forces deployed for the operation probably totaled about 3,000 to 4,000 troops.

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According to satellite photography, the fire support bases comprised roughly 13 batteries of artillery. Oriented east and east-southeast toward the Cal River Valley, the artillery included:

- two 2S3 152-mm self-propelled gun batteries and one battery of BM-21 multiple rocket launchers from the artillery regiment of the 201st Motorized Rifle Regiment at Konduz.
- two 2S5 152-mm self-propelled artillery batteries from Kabul.
- one BM-27 multiple rocket launcher battery from Kabul.
- one 2S3 152-mm self-propelled gun battalion, one BM-21 multiple rocket launcher battery, and an M-1976 firing section from the artillery regiment of the 108th Motorized Rifle Division in Kabul.
- two 2S1 122-mm self-propelled howitzer batteries from a motorized rifle regiment of the 201st Motorized Rifle Division.

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Satellite photography indicates that the maneuver units involved in the operation were engaged primarily in securing lines of communication and the fire support

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bases. Combat activity by the maneuver units appears to have been minimal; the operation illustrates the growing Soviet preference for confronting the insurgents from safe distances to limit casualties. Activities of the infantry forces involved were as follows:

- The Soviet motorized rifle regiment from Konduz and a Soviet motorized rifle battalion from Pol-e Khomri secured the route from Konduz to Eshkamesh. Elements of an unidentified Soviet infantry unit provided perimeter security for the northeastern fire support base. [REDACTED]

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- Two of the six Afghan infantry units that participated--each with about 60 vehicles--secured the valleys to the north and south of the deployment area. The remaining Afghan units appeared to function as quick-reaction units. For instance, [REDACTED] one unit appeared to have completed a sweep of a small valley near the northeastern fire support base. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] both the Soviets and Afghans set up command posts for the operation. The Soviet forward command post contained elements of the 201st Motorized Rifle Division signals battalion and of the 40th Army signals regiment. A Twin Ear troposcatter communications set linked the Eshkamesh command post to Konduz--where a KGB communications unit was located--in addition to Soviet 40th Army and Afghan Army command elements. [REDACTED]

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Air support appears to have been mainly Soviet. Aircraft that participated included MI-8 Hip and MI-24 Hind attack helicopters from Konduz; SU-17 Fitter fighter-bombers from Kakayty in the USSR; and SU-25 Frogfoot, SU-17 Fitter, and MIG-21 strike aircraft from Bagram. [REDACTED]

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